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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 003723

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STATE PASS AIT/W

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TAGS: [PGOV TW](#)

SUBJECT: LY ELECTION UPDATE: THE PLOT THICKENS IN YUNLIN COUNTY

REF: A. TAIPEI 03294

[B](#). TAIPEI 03340

[C](#). TAIPEI 03231

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#). (C) Summary: Hotly contested Yunlin County (six seats) remains one of the most volatile races in the LY campaign. The fugitive Magistrate Chang Jung-wei is still missing, but he and his criminal case remain the focus of the election. Bitter infighting has broken out as candidates realize each side overnominated, although the situation is much worse for the Pan-Blue. Unless the Pan-Blue gets its act together and rallies behind its strongest candidates, it seems likely that each side will take three seats (a gain of one seat for the Pan-Green). End Summary.

The Perils of Polling in Yunlin

[2](#). (C) Much has changed in the month since AIT's last visit (Ref A) to hotly contested Yunlin County, but the outcome of the December Legislative Yuan (LY) election remains as unpredictable as ever. Eighteen candidates registered in October to compete for Yunlin's six seats, and although none has officially given up yet, the number of serious contenders has narrowed to about ten or eleven, more than initially expected. Several newspaper polls have come out in the last few weeks, but local observers are hesitant to make any predictions because polls are considered especially unreliable in Yunlin County. As many as 60 percent of those surveyed indicate that they are still "undecided" or otherwise do not want to reveal their preference. Tai Li-an, director of ERA Survey Research Center, a polling company, speculated that many people refuse to answer surveys in Yunlin "because they're afraid it's somebody (such as a vote-buyer or a gangster) checking up on them." Yunlin is notorious for rampant vote-buying, voter intimidation, and the involvement of organized crime in local politics, factors that further complicate any efforts at predicting the outcome of the election.

Likely to Split 3-3; Independents Remain a Wild Card

[3](#). (C) Nevertheless, many people AIT spoke with were willing to forecast levels of overall support for each side and these predictions were remarkably consistent. Observers on both sides said the Pan-Blue (including mavericks) would likely get 200,000 votes. Estimates for the Pan-Green varied from 130,000 to 150,000 votes. These numbers would seem to favor the Pan-Blue, and both People First Party (PFP) County Director Wu Chih-chou and Kuomintang (KMT) County Chairman Huang Shang-wen said they are confident that Pan-Blue candidates can take four of Yunlin's six seats. However, they both acknowledged that because there are more candidates running on the Pan-Blue side (as many as seven serious contenders against four on the Pan-Green side), there is a significant chance the vote might be spread too thinly, thereby allowing the Pan-Green to capture three seats. Pan-Green observers said their more disciplined nomination strategy and better "peipiao" vote-distribution make a 3-3 split the most likely outcome in December. (Note: The danger of overnomination and the role of peipiao in Taiwan's multi-member districts is explained more fully in Ref B. End Note.)

The Fugitive Magistrate Makes House Calls?

[4](#). (C) Chang Jung-wei, the fugitive County Magistrate who disappeared in August after being implicated in a bribery scandal (Ref C), is still missing. However it is not a secret that he is still in Yunlin, as Democratic Progressive

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Party (DPP) legislator Su Chih-fen noted: "Chang is still here, he's still the Magistrate, and he still has influence."

Rumors abound that he is involved to various degrees in the LY election campaign of his younger sister Chang Li-shan, a KMT maverick running without a party endorsement. KMT Organizational Development Committee Chairman Liao Feng-te said in Taipei that he heard Chang is able to visit

supporters around the county, and eludes capture by traveling in one of five identical vehicles. Other rumors have him attending the funerals of family friends at night, or even suggest he might have set up a secret meeting with Chen Shui-bian to negotiate a pardon. KMT County Chairman Huang was dismissive of such gossip, saying that "Chang is too famous to appear in public safely." Huang acknowledged, however, that Chang is involved in his sister's election campaign, primarily "by lending her resources, and using his connections."

Two Incumbents, the Sister and the Secretary

15. (C) Because of the Magistrate's support, most observers think Chang stands a very good chance of being elected. However, KMT incumbent Hsu Shu-po is the only Pan-Blue candidate whose seat is considered safe. Huang said that Hsu's reliable support comes from his influence with the Farmers' Associations and the connections of his father, a former County Magistrate. The other two Pan-Blue front-runners are PFP incumbent Chen Chien-sung and the KMT's Chang Shuo-wen, whose father is the Farmland Irrigation Association Chairman. However, Chang is also the Magistrate's former secretary and much of his support comes from the Magistrate's faction, noted DPP legislator Su. If the Magistrate is really urging his supporters to vote for his sister, Su said, "Chang Shuo-wen might lose his seat."

The Loser, The Snubbed Incumbent, and Two Gangsters

16. (C) Most observers say that former legislator Hou Hui-hsien, the KMT's third nominee, is unlikely to win election, since she also ran and failed to take a seat in the 2001 LY election. Depending on how much support she gets, however, she might siphon off enough Pan-Blue votes to allow the Pan-Green to capture an extra seat. KMT incumbent Tseng Tsai Mei-tso, who is reportedly upset at being passed over

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for nomination in favor of Hou despite having received the most KMT votes in 2001, has decided to run as an independent. Tseng's level of support is abnormally high for an independent, and rumors abound as to the reasons why. PFP County Director Wu speculated that DPP legislator Su is helping her in an attempt to win the support of Tseng's faction for her planned candidacy in next year's County Magistrate election. However, when AIT met with Su, she had almost nothing positive to say about Tseng.

17. (C) Gossip tabloids have offered another explanation for Tseng's performance. The cover of a recent issue had photos

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of her meeting with alleged representatives of the Yamaguchi-gumi, a major Japanese Yakuza clan. The article claimed that the group is actively helping her with her reelection campaign. When asked about these rumors, KMT County Chairman Huang laughed and said, "Oh, that would be her little brother." Tseng's brother, he explained, is a major figure in the Yunlin underworld. The PFP's Wu said that her brother is known as "Blackbeard" and will ensure that she gets all the underground vote. He added that he thinks she is more likely to win than Chang Li-shan, the Magistrate's sister. Another gangster, former KMT legislator Lin Ming-yi, is running under the Nonpartisan Solidarity Union (NSU) banner. Huang was dismissive of this threat, saying Lin's influence on the final outcome would not be large, because "he's out of money now and can't afford to buy votes anymore."

The DPP's Underground Radio Snake-Oil Salesman

18. (C) DPP incumbent Lin Kuo-hua's seat is widely considered safe. Peipiao will help one, and maybe both, of the other nominees win election. Although he was considered the weaker candidate by observers in October, Chen Hsien-chung now looks the more likely of the two to win election. The KMT's Huang said this is because Chen is constantly reminding voters that he was personally asked by Chen Shui-bian to run for election. The other DPP nominee, Lin Shu-shan, is less likely to win, said County Information Director Hung Po-lin, a KMT appointee, because he is best known for running an unlicensed radio station on which he sells overpriced vitamin supplements of dubious medicinal value. Huang added that because of Lin's negative image, DPP voters might not abide by a peipiao scheme that demands they vote for him. DPP legislator Su was silent about Lin, explaining her decision to help only Chen's campaign by saying "we're from the same hometown."

The TSU's Activist Councilwoman

9. (C) Su is also actively campaigning on behalf of her friend, TSU County Councilwoman Yin Ling-ying, who has been her ally in her long battle with Magistrate Chang Jung-wei. Over the past few years, Su and Yin have opposed many of Chang's construction and development plans on environmental as well as ethical grounds, accusing him of taking bribes and giving contracts to friends and relatives. His current legal predicament was the result of Yin's efforts. Her popularity with voters has been boosted by the bad publicity the Magistrate gets, so Su and Yin take every available opportunity they can find to criticize Chang. However, another TSU County Councilmember, Lee Chien-sheng, said he is worried that the DPP will try to squeeze out Yin if it does not have enough votes for all three of its own candidates. Information Director Hung offered a similar assessment, but said the attack had already begun. He explained that Lin Kuo-hua and his allies on the County Council have started criticizing her for being too obstructionist, thereby keeping needed development and jobs out of Yunlin.

Comment: Infighting to be Expected

10. (C) The type of bitter infighting that is breaking out in Yunlin County is typical of an overnominated district in Taiwan's multi-member single non-transferable vote system (Ref B). Candidates on both sides have all but stopped campaigning against their opponents in the other camp in favor of trying to steal easier votes from their "allies". The degree to which parties on either side can get voters to rally around their strongest candidates and drop the weakest will determine the final makeup of Yunlin's LY seats. The Pan-Green side will have a much easier job of this as they only have four candidates. If the DPP were to drop one of its candidates, the Pan-Green would be all but assured of taking three seats. Given the chaos on the Pan-Blue side, however, this might not be necessary or even desirable. If the Pan-Blue divides its votes particularly poorly, the Pan-Green even stands a slim chance of getting all four candidates elected.

11. (C) The biggest variable is how the vote will be split among Pan-Blue candidates, and that is difficult to predict until after the vote-buying has begun in earnest. The KMT would not likely be able to sacrifice a candidate successfully even if it tried. KMT candidates are far less disciplined than DPP candidates, and the sacrificed candidate would likely continue campaigning independently, just like all the mavericks who lost in the KMT primaries. With seven serious candidates on the Pan-Blue side (with and without party endorsements), it will not be easy to hold the Pan-Green to its current two seats, even with the expected advantage in votes (200,000 vs. as little as 130,000 on the Pan-Green side). The most likely outcome still appears to be three seats for each side, which will represent a gain of one seat for the Pan-Green in its quest to build a majority in the LY.

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